



March 4, 2022

Arizona Department of Insurance and Financial Institutions (DIFI)
100 North 15th Avenue, Suite 261
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2630

Attention: Mary Boatright, JD, CHC, Manager, Life & Health Oversight
public_comments@difi.az.gov

Re: Comments to Proposed MHPAEA Rulemaking

Dear Department of Insurance and Financial Institutions,

On behalf of our nearly 4,000 member physicians, the Arizona Medical Association writes in support of the written comments offered in this cycle by the Arizona Psychiatric Society (APS) in response to proposed rules promulgated by the Department of Insurance and Financial Institutions (DIFI), as required by Arizona Senate Bill SB1523 (“Jake’s Law”) and ARS § 20-3502 to ensure compliance with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA).

In the 2020 legislative session, Jake’s Law was adopted by unanimous vote of both chambers of the Arizona legislature and signed into law by Governor Ducey. This mental health omnibus had such widespread support because of the imperative need to address mental health care access in our community and suicide awareness and prevention. A crucial piece of ensuring that care can be accessed is compliance with MHPAEA. The important work to be done under Jake’s Law is left unfinished until this final piece of rulemaking is completed.

We support the scope of comments offered by the Arizona Psychiatric Society, with particular emphasis on the assertion that the draft rules are compatible with and did not exceed the comparative analysis requirements of MHPAEA. As such, we request that these rules move forward, with benefit of the clarifying term comments submitted by APS. Implementation of these rules will open the door so the important work of DIFI to provide support to Arizona insurers and consumers and appropriate oversight to compliance with the MHPAEA can begin.

Multiple lines of evidence indicate that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has profound psychological and social effects. Mental health consequences of the COVID-19 crisis including suicidal behavior are likely to be present for a long time and peak later than the actual pandemic. Jake’s Law has the potential to save lives with even more urgency than when it was signed into law in March of 2020. We applaud the work of DIFI to bring forward rulemaking that enforces the MHPAEA with equivalency and stand in support of the comments submitted by the Arizona Psychiatric Society.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Miriam Anand, M.D., FACP, FAAAAI, FACAAI
President, Arizona Medical Association

Dr. Bill Thompson, M.D. FASA
Legislative Chair, Arizona Medical Association